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ABSTRACT

A discrepancy model is proposed as one way to meet the program needs of gifted and talented students. The model incorporates processes which first identify strengths then those academic or other talents in which the student shows limited or no ability. The third aspect of the model calls for identification of those areas in which the individual lacks experience, interest, exposure, or opportunities to develop motivation. The resulting profile of strengths, discrepancies, and nonexperience may help prevent excessively early specialization and help program appropriate tasks. Sample forms and interview instruments are included. (CL)

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A DISCREPANCY MODEL FOR MEETING THE PROGRAM NEEDS OF THE GIFTED AND TALENTED

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Potential and Achievement of the Gifted and Talented

In the organization of school activities for the gifted and talented, attention is generally paid to the areas in which they demonstrate interests, motivation, and achievement. Thus, rapid learners and the more accomplished are given opportunities for enrichment. They are invited to move from the simple to the complex, from the single, linear concept to the multi-dimensional. They seek out the disciplines related to those in which they show initial outstanding performance.

Along with enrichment, the gifted and talented may be provided with special groupings on the basis of common high achievement. Groups ranging from pairs to larger numbers may move together on projects and activities, through subject matter, and toward ever-higher levels of development in areas of strength.

As a further approach to facilitating progress for the gifted and talented, the opportunity for acceleration is provided. It is argued that a twelve-year program of education need not restrict or restrain those learners who master the goals of schooling in less time. Students may therefore be placed at the educational level which is most receptive and appropriate to their individual stages of development and where their propensities for growth may continue to flourish.

Paper presented at the National Conference on Gifted and Talented (Orlando, FL, December 4, 1981)

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These organizational variations provided for the gifted are generally known to professionals and to parents, though differences of opinion may exist as to the appropriateness of specific measures. Differences in practice are the ultimate result.

On the other hand, some gifted and talented students have been determined to be under-achievers in special areas and in need of curricular measures and special organizational structures. Instead of program development toward student strengths, the focus and concern in many cases is upon failure of students to realize potential ability in given areas. These "under-achieving" gifted may be working at lower-than-expected academic levels; indeed, they may be achieving below the norms for their age group.

For consistent achievers among the gifted and talented, there are problems of program organization, the extent of enrichment, the advisability of acceleration, and of guidance, both career and social. For the under-achieving gifted, various measures concerning inadequate levels of motivation and self-concept, poor social adjustment, and needs for teacher in-service education are considered. Given the impact of such factors upon the gifted, individuals may develop lacking the full expression and achievement of their abilities, one-sided in their strengths, and, in some cases, generally under-developed socially, intellectually, and vocationally.

The Issue of Discrepancy

In this paper, an attempt is made to emphasize conditions in which the gifted and talented face omissions or lacks in achievement or in experience. In modern society, parents and professional educators tend to stress and facilitate those elements of giftedness in which achievement has been verified. This applies to both the achieving and the "under-achieving". In the latter case, the greatest concern is for the major school subjects, particularly the vocation-influencing ones.

Yet discrepencies exist for all gifted in aspects where there is a lack of balance in development, with ensuing weaknesses requiring attention in configurations different from those of under-achievement.

The issue of discrepancy is one of weakness versus strength, in any field, with special emphasis upon lack of experience, exposure, modeling, or interest. Children who pursue their areas of strength intensively tend to omit, ignore, or only occasionally test themselves in other areas. Gifted students in mathematics and the sciences, for example, may show less motivation and achievement in foreign languages, literature, and language arts. These students may be persistent readers and doers in books in their "major" fields, and have little or nothing to do with poetry, novels, drama, or short stories. They are not under-achievers, being competent readers and writers. They show discrepancies in their educational (and non-school) experiences which may be cumulative and, unfortunately, permanent.

The imbalance between areas of strength (high interest and motivation) and of weakness (low interest and motivation) represents a discrepancy and a cause for concern with regard to the basic welfare of the child.

Discrepancies are currently observed in programs for gifted girls as compared with those generally emphasized for boys. Notable are the areas of mathematics, the sciences, and certain other subjects which, for girls, receive less attention, less motivation, and less participation. The insufficiency of women as models of success in these fields; current social avoidances deflect girls and young women from such experiences in school and out of it; parental fears about girls' social development, their marriage chances, and their entry into restricted professions, all

have important effects. Some areas of the arts are, on the other hand, more for girls than for boys: ballet; orchestral strings and winds rather than brasses and tympani; musical performance rather than musical composition. Readers may arrive at other such examples that favor girls and omit boys, as well as the reverse.

Of particular concern for gifted boys is the discrepancy in their performance and participation in school athletics and recreational sports. Many observers can report the experience of the gifted boy who, when joining his peers on the school playground, participates in the drama of "choosing up sides". He hears the more experienced and competent boys being named and assigned to a team and then, being last chosen, he hears the negative comments: "Why do we have to have him? He's not any good!" The last-chosen is thus verbally savaged and in time prefers to avoid such experiences. Being placed in the relatively inactive right field of the baseball diamond, he has time to mull over his condition. promising himself revenge (from his verbal strengths), vowing to overcome his lack of skill and popularity (by self-directed practic and exercises), and hoping to make the catch that wins the game in spite of all. Sometimes he does, but more often the ball that comes his way catches him unready and awkward. He has now confirmed the predictions of his peers and feels the continued loss of an important form of social acceptance.

Such trauma for boys and (in this and other aspects) for girls tend to stimulate habits of avoidance, of derision toward others, gifted or not, who participate and succeed, and of isolation or clannishness among the compensating non-participants. Experiences of peer rejection in the case of games and sports, experiences of inadequacy in the arts, and simply the lack of experience in areas of acknowledged importance

among children and youth can be devastating. They combine to reduce self-concept and to engender needless hostility and fraudulent elitism. While society may not necessarily suffer loss from such discrepancies for the gifted, in some cases the individual's loss may indeed be society's as well. The failure to test the waters of one's potential is, for the gifted and talented, a failure of participation, of involvement, and ultimately of achievement. This may be as true for discrepancies in the language arts, foreign languages, mathematics, and the sciences as for those in the arts, music, and sports and games.

Generational influences may be cumulative contributions to discrepancies in young children; parents, gifted or not, cause their gifted children to pursue or avoid activities in the earliest years, developing discrepancies and non-achievement of potential. Some parents, lacking experience or competence in certain areas, will seek those very activities for their children. On the other hand, those parents may encourage their children, directly or indirectly, to be like them; may counsel and encourage their children only toward acknowledged strengths and areas of ready success; may suggest a minimum of risk-taking in unexplored areas.

Discrepancies in any field, academic, artistic, social, or physical-recreational, bring about distorted, unbalanced, and skewed development. When left unexamined and unremedied, they may produce the incomplete and inadequate citizen.

The Discrepancy Model

The constructs of the Discrepancy Model are based upon the foregoing discussion with emphasis on lack of experience, interest, and/or competency. It is postulated that for gifted and talented individuals, the latter is

an outcome of the two prior elements. Lack of competency or achievement in the areas under consideration ensues from the absence of experience which may be the result of disinterest.

It is necessary, therefore, to distinguish between strengths (or abilities) and interest (or motivation). Given high level achievement in an aspect of education or life activity, high level interest may be assumed. It is doubtful, however, that the reverse is true: high interest and motivation alone may not result in high achievement. For gifted children, this need not be so; given motivation and experience, with an appropriate curriculum and instruction, achievement is likely to be attained. The model proposes, therefore, several stages.

First are the processes by which a gifted individual's strengths are delineated from "low" to "high". Such determination brings to early view the discrepancy areas for the individual. Where "strength" is "high" or "average", it need not be considered a discrepancy. This stage in the process brings forth information from the individual himself or herself, from one or more teachers, and from one or both parents.

In this initial stage, the delineation of "low" strength (meaning minimal achievement or none) is reviewed on the basis of the source of information. Agreement among several sources as to an individual's strengths or lack of them would be observable by inspection of the instruments provided.

Of major importance, coming from the indications of "low" ability, are the indications of "inexperience". Such inexperience, linked with low ability, would constitute a proximate determination of discrepancy and would be at this early stage a potential source for curriculum planning.

Coupled with the determination of strengths and of inexperience, is

the concept of interest. For the individual to indicate his or her own interest as "high", "average", or "low" is to enrich the data in terms of self-perception. The separate rubric, "inexperienced", is seen as an important item of information which, in conjunction with other data, reinforces the discrepancy concept and gives further guidance for the development of an individual education plan.

Reports on these aspects of interest and strength by teachers and parents provide not only for consensus of evidence among different observers, but introduces a further important and interesting input from parents. Self-reporting by mother or father, or both, may provide special information regarding the strength of a discrepancy (or several) in terms of its origin and persistence. In addition, this evidence provides basic source material for subsequent consultation with parents for their positive orientation toward the processes of the Discrepancy Model. There is always the clear necessity for parent understanding of, and participation in, a program designed to reduce or eliminate discrepancies in the development of the individual child.

Following the determination of areas requiring priority attention ---on the basis of acknowledged "low interest/low ability"---the planning curriculum is undertaken. Teachers, student, counselors, and parents promulgate a workable sequence of activities which will provide experience where there has been none, will develop skills training, success-oriented and at no risk to the individual. Planned activities will be carried out by the student with well-prepared teachers, peers, and/or mentors. While it may be difficult to anticipate the time allocations for each individual, the activities should nourish motivation and grow from the successful attainment of skills.

As the processes of the model are carried out, modifications in self-perception and in motivation should provide a basis for the eventual rejection of socially-imposed stereotypes and for encouraging the participation of the individual in formerly-denied areas of action. Too much stress cannot be placed on the no-failure, minimal-stress ambiance, on the opportunity for specific "hands-on" experience, and on the encouragement and appreciation of perceptive teachers, parents, siblings, and peers.

From this model and its processes should follow the removal or reduction of the discrepancies that were noted earlier as major causes of non-achievement.

Assessment of Outputs of the Model

In determining the effectiveness of the model, several approaches will be used: observation, self-reporting, and production. The removal of discrepancies for an individual is observed and reported by several types of informants.

Family members may complete a current version of the first questionnaire on the individual's interests and strengths. This may be supplemented by journal-type reports, by samples of "products", and by informal statements to teacher, counselor, administrator, or researcher. Of particular interest in assessment by family members would be the individual's taking of initiatives in new areas, instances of new perseverance, and the uses of time on an autonomous rather than on an enforced basis.

Peer informants may provide similar evidence with special emphasis upon the individual's comfortable adaptation within formerly avoided situations, upon his or her greater strength in such situations, as well

as upon peer acceptance of the individual in contrast with earlier rejection.

Teachers and other school personnel will respond to a second version of the original questionnaire and will provide further data similar to the evidence of family and peers. Special attention must be given to information about the individual's expressed attitudes, interests, and goals as well as to relevant implementing behavior.

Finally, it is the gifted individual himself or herself who acknowledges the modification or removal of discrepancies. Responses to a new version of the original student questionnaire, journal or diary material, statements to relevant individuals (parents, teachers, peers), and, ultimately, a new pattern of behavior that reflects the absence of discrepancies and the rejection of stereotypes.

It is this individual, in turn, who may become not only a new "high interest/high achiever", but a mentor for others who are undertaking the same process.

Conclusion

The Discrepancy Model for meeting the program needs of the gifted and talented represents a concept regarding non-achievement that proceeds from non-experience linked with failure and dejection toward experience linked with success and satisfaction. It offers the possibility of enhanced social participation and improved personal adjustment. While accommodating these important human needs, the model facilitates the expansion of cognitive and vocational interests and provides for motivation and perseverance in achieving previously unplanned-for goals. In this regard, a perceptive observer will have noted that, with special attention to individual potential, the model can be effective for children with handicapping conditions and, indeed, for all others.

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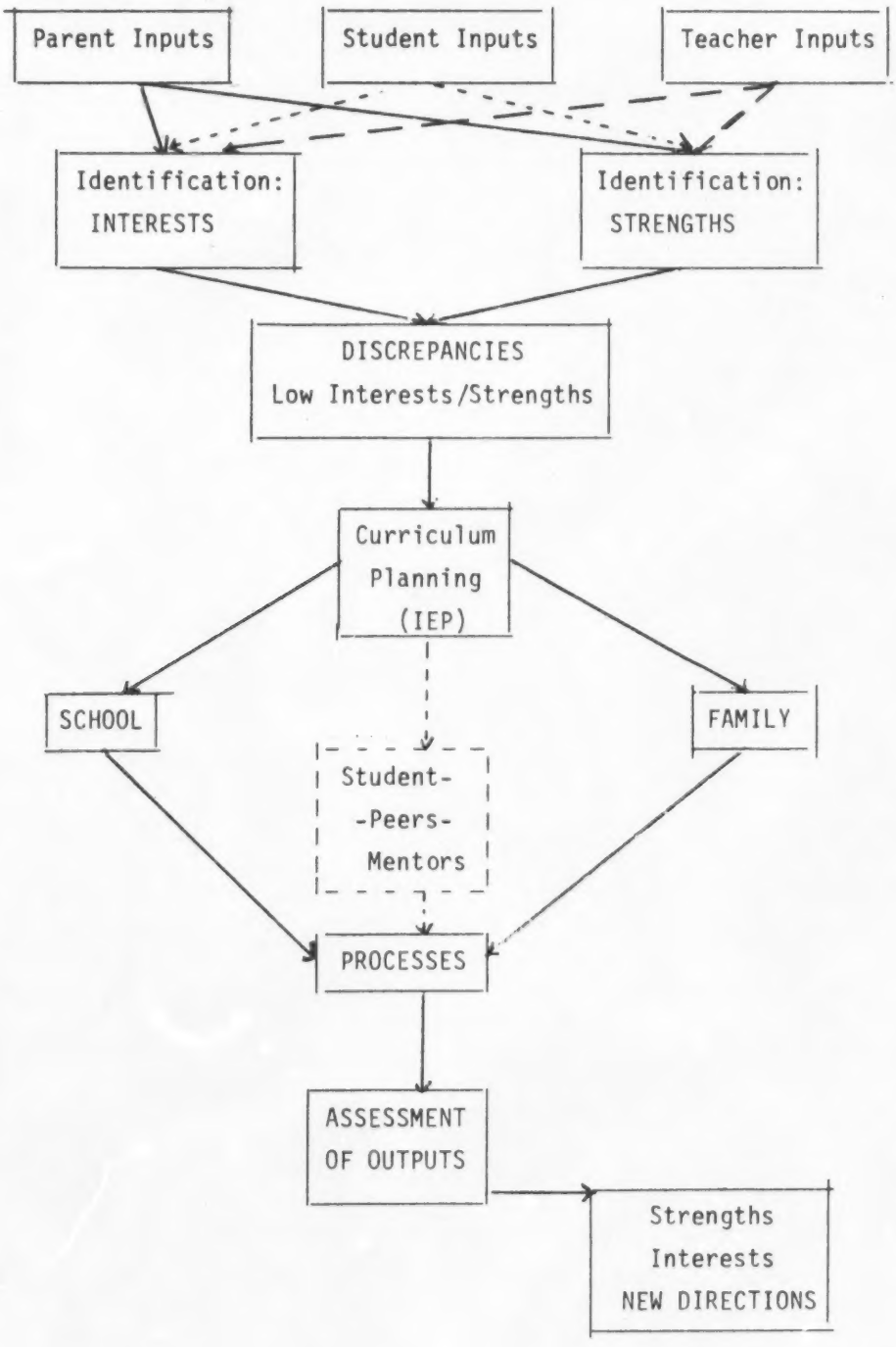
DISCREPANCY MODEL FOR MEETING THE PROGRAM NEEDS OF THE GIFTED AND TALENTED

N. Kravetz



QUESTIONNAIRE ON STUDENT INTERESTS

Student: _____

Grade: _____ Age: ____ M ___ F ___

The purpose of this questionnaire is to obtain information about your interests and your abilities in certain topics and subjects. Under INTEREST, mark x the level of your interest in the topic: High Average Low. Inexper. means you have no experience in the topic and don't know much about it. Under ABILITY, mark x the level of your ability, how well you feel you do in it. Next to each topic, use the space to say which one or which activity you want to mention. For example, Art, say painting, sculpture, drawing, etc. This information will be used to plan changes in your school curriculum or other activities in which you may take part. Thank you for your help!

Topic or Subject	INTEREST				ABILITY		
	High	Average	Low	Inexper.	High	Average	Low
Arithmetic-mathematics							
Sciences							
Foreign language							
Literature							
Writing							
Other							
Art							
Music							
Dance-movement							
Drama							
Other							
Team sports							
Individual sports							
Water sports							
Track and field							
Other athletics							

My Priorities for getting more experience and improving my abilities are: WRITE 1, 2, and 3 next to the above topics that you prefer to work on.

CURRICULAR STRENGTHS OF GIFTED STUDENTS Student: _____

Date: _____ Grade: _____ Age: _____ M___ F___

Dear Teacher: The purpose of this questionnaire is to obtain information about the strengths of gifted students in specific areas and subjects. Please mark x to indicate this student's achievement level from whatever sources you may have. If you feel this student has little or no experience in a topic, please mark x under Inexper.
Next to each topic, use the space to specify the particular aspect you wish to mention, for example, Sciences, which one; Art, say painting, sculpture, etc. Your comments for each area will be welcome. If you have no knowledge in an area, use the comment line.

Topic or Subject	STRENGTH				Comments
	High	Average	Low	Inexper.	
Arithmetic-mathematics					
Sciences					
Foreign language					
Literature					
Writing					
Other					
Art					
Music					
Dance-movement					
Drama					
Other					
Team sports					
Individual sports					
Water sports					
Track and Field					
Other athletics					

For this student, please indicate the areas which you feel should be given priority for his or her best further development; mark 1, 2, and 3 next to the topics you choose.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION!

Teacher _____

PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE ON STUDENT INTERESTS Student _____

Grade ____ Age ____ M ___ F ___ Date _____

Dear Parents: The purpose of this questionnaire is to obtain information about gifted students and their special abilities and interests. It is also valuable to know of parent interests and strengths. Please mark x for your child's interests and abilities as you believe you know them. Your own interests and strengths should be marked as they are now or as they have been in the past. For each square, please mark M or F or B, for Mother, Father, or Both. THANK YOU!

TOPIC OR SUBJECT	STUDENT INTEREST				STUDENT ABILITY			PARENT INTEREST				PARENT ABILITY		
(Specify which-on the line)	High	Average	Low	Inexperienced	High	Average	Low	High	Average	Low	Inexper.	High	Average	Low
Arithmetic-mathematics														
Sciences														
Foreign language														
Literature														
Writing														
Other														
Art														
Music														
Dance-movement														
Drama														
Other														
Team sports														
Individual sports														
Water sports														
Track and field														
Other Athletics														

Please indicate your suggested priorities for the further development of your child's interests and abilities by placing 1, 2, and 3 next to the activities.

Discrepancy Model: Educating the Gifted and Talented

PARENT PROFILE

Student _____

Grade _____ Age ____ M ___ F ___

Date _____

			Mother	Father	Both	
INTERESTS	Reported for:					
	Lowest:	1				
		2				
		3				
	Highest:	1				
		2				
		3				
ABILITIES	Reported for:					
	Lowest:	1				
		2				
		3				
	Highest:	1				
		2				
		3				

Discrepancy focus: HIGH INTEREST/LOW ABILITY

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____

AVERAGE INTEREST/LOW ABILITY

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____

LOW INTEREST/LOW ABILITY

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____

Discrepancy Model: Educating the Gifted and Talented

STUDENT PROFILE

Student _____

Grade _____ Age _____ M ___ F ___

Date _____

			Self	Teacher	Parents
INTERESTS	Reported by:				
	Lowest:	1			
		2			
		3			
	Highest:	1			
		2			
		3			
ABILITIES	Reported by:				
	Lowest:	1			
		2			
		3			
	Highest:	1			
		2			
		3			

Student priorities: 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____

Teacher priorities: 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____

Parent priorities: 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____

Discrepancy focus: HIGH INTEREST/LOW ABILITY

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____

AVERAGE INTEREST/LOW ABILITY

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____

LOW INTEREST/LOW ABILITY

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____

CURRICULUM FOCUS: 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____